

# Wendigo

A novel by  
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# PART 1

# The Wraith

# THE BEAR

It moved silently through the dense Alaskan wilderness. Meandering through the trees, seemingly without purpose, it followed the brisk August wind. But the creature had purpose. Its sole driving desire, its very reason for existence, was to create havoc. It prowled the forest, unseen by any eye, bringing terror, madness and death. A malevolent spirit with a rapacious desire for chaos, the Wendigo was currently in its most docile form. But though the creature was ethereal, it could still be lethal. Cunning and mischievous, with a limited ability to persuade the elements, the imp could manipulate its environment to achieve its most coveted goal—to become tangible, a living, breathing, nigh-indestructible horror of unimaginable power and savagery with an insatiable appetite for human flesh.

Less than a mile from the Wendigo's current location Alaska's second most deadly predator was foraging for its supper. Standing over nine feet tall and weighing half a ton, the Alaskan brown bear was the largest predator walking the face of the earth, fearing nothing but a larger specimen of its own species.

The massive boar lumbered through the forest, his olfactory system one of the keenest in the world, sniffing the air for something, anything to eat. Like most bears, the brownie was not a discerning eater. He stopped at a fallen spruce tree and dug into the rotten wood with his formidable claws. A nest of termites was exposed and the bear quickly lapped them up with his elongated tongue. He scratched deeper into the wood, uncovering more insects, which he disposed of in the same fashion. But the bear quickly tired of the bugs and lumbered onward, heading for a nearby stream where he could get a drink and might even catch a fish or two.

The great bear walked cautiously down the bank toward the stream, the wet leaves under its feet making the ground treacherous; but he navigated the distance without incident and found himself standing in the cold, clear water of the stream. He first lapped up a copious amount of water, washing down the termites, and then began hunting for fish. A big salmon would have been delightful, but this stream was too shallow and all he found was a small trout. The bear dragged the fish onto the bank where he rended the flesh from his catch and consumed it hungrily. Soon, little was left save the head and fins which the brownie, after a moment's hesitation, consumed as well. He then waded back into the water where he continued his search for food.

The bear flipped over a ten-pound stone and found a fairly large crayfish beneath it. The exposed crustacean saw the bear peering at it and raised its claws in a futile attempt to defend itself as it retreated. Not indigenous to Alaska, but sometimes finding its way there, the invasive crayfish was a rare find, but that mattered little to the bear, which saw only a potential source of food. With a single swipe of his paw the bear scooped the crayfish out of the water and sent it hurling up onto the bank. The bear padded over to consume his dazed prey when something caught his attention. He stopped in the stream, forgetting his dinner, and smelled the air as he looked up and down the stream. The hackles on his back stood erect as he searched for the threat he could instinctively feel but neither see nor smell. The forgotten crayfish picked itself up and waddled back into the stream where it hid itself under another rock. The bear took no notice. His head swiveled back and forth searching for the predator he sensed but could not locate.

The brownie rose up on its back legs, displaying his full size in an attempt to frighten away the predator he felt all around him but the gesture was useless; the Wendigo knew nothing of fear. It circled the bear, taunting it, playing with the brownie's instincts that insisted the threat was there, while his other senses said it was not. The bear attacked, swatting at the air around it, trying to kill the evil wraith that laughed in his ears, inside his very mind. He roared in a mixture of anger and raw terror; then pawed at his eyes and ears in a futile attempt to drive the laughter from his mind. Finally, with no other course of action available, the bear fled. He ran full speed up the bank and back into the woods where he hoped to escape his tormentor. But the Wendigo followed, its maniacal laughter ringing in

the bear's ears. The bear reached the tree where it had found the termites. There with its back to the fallen Spruce, the mighty Alaskan brown bear cowered in a trembling mass, its jaws snapping aimlessly in the air. His bladder let loose but he was oblivious to the expanding puddle of warm urine beneath him. He only knew the unending, merciless laughter of the Wendigo as his mind slipped into madness.